SAINSBURY MUSEUM AND ART CENTRE

Press release

Love Stories

A new photography exhibition capturing the raw reality of intimacy, launching as part of the Sainsbury Museum and Art Centre's new season investigating *How Do We Find Love?*



Richard Billingham, *Liz Egg and Tea,* 1995.

18 December 2026 – 30 May 2027
Sainsbury Museum and Art Centre, Norwich

***Love Stories* brings together work by ten internationally acclaimed photographers, Richard Billingham, Martin Parr, Akihito Yoshida, Zanele Muholi, Sunil Gupta, Charan Singh, Masahisa Fukase, Ollie Adegbayo, Isabel Okoro and Carol Allen-Storey to reveal the many ways love shapes our everyday lives. The exhibition moves beyond conventional romantic narratives**

to reveal diverse intimate stories of friendship, family, partnership, community and selfhood.

Rather than presenting idealised visions of love, *Love Stories* embraces the complexities of human relationships, capturing moments that are humorous, mundane, tender, awkward, painful, joyful and deeply moving. Timeless and thought-provoking, the works reveal the emotional depth found in everyday acts of care, connection, conflict and intimacy, inviting visitors to recognise themselves and others in images that show love not as perfection, but as something lived, negotiated and experienced every day.

Among the exhibition's highlights are works by legendary figures and contemporary trailblazers alike, who invite audiences to reflect on the richness, vulnerability, resilience, and complexity of the relationships that shape us.

The exhibition features photographs by Martin Parr (1952–2025), whose series *Bored Couples* (1990–93) combines wit, social commentary and visual storytelling to explore modern relationships through scenes captured in public spaces across Europe including restaurants, holiday resorts and ferries. Parr described the project as an exploration of how titles and captions influence interpretation, encouraging viewers to question whether the couples depicted are genuinely bored or whether that perception is created by the title itself.

Love Stories also includes work by award-winning photojournalist Carol Allen-Storey (b.1951, New York City, USA), who frequently explores complex humanitarian and social issues, with a focus on women and children. Her ongoing *Defying the Myth* (2014–) series carefully documents the lives of three single mothers raising children with severe disabilities, a decade-long personal project chronicling this often-unseen experience, while Ollie Adegbayo’s series *Bàbá, Father* (2021–23) presents intimate portraits of Black fathers photographed with their children, inspired by his own transition into fatherhood and shared experiences with close friends.

The exhibition marks the first time that Japanese photographer Akihito Yoshida's (b.1980, Miyazaki, Japan) series *The Absence of Two* (2017) and *The Dialogue of Two* (2022) have been shown in the United Kingdom. The former examines the relationship between Yoshida’s grandmother and her grandson Daiki, the photographer’s cousin; capturing their daily life together, the love they shared and its eventual ending while the latter explores what remains after a loss, imagining a continuing connection shared by two people separated by death.

It also includes the series *Lovers, Revisited,* by writer and activist Sunil Gupta (b.1953, New Delhi, India) created together with his husband Charan Singh (b.1978, India), which revisits a landmark photographic project that challenged stereotypes in the 1980s, establishing a powerful intergenerational dialogue on love, identity and visibility while reflecting on the changing realities of LGBTQIA+ lives.

Isabel Okoro's (b.2001, Lagos, Nigeria) series *Friends in Eternity* (2021) captures young friends playing on a beach together, responding to a need for images documenting young Black people in worry-free states; and a series of self-portraits by Zanele Muholi (b.1972, Umlazi, South Africa) *Somnyama Ngonyama (Hail the Dark Lioness)* (2016–8) are explained as reclaiming Blackness with pride and challenging historical stereotypes and exclusion from mainstream visual culture, has become a defining work of the 21st century, exploring race, gender, representation and the politics of visibility through striking black-and-white imagery.

The exhibition also includes work by Japanese photographer Masahisa Fukase (1934–2012), celebrated for work which was deeply personal, emotionally intense and often darkly obsessive. On display is *From Window* (1974), a series made during his 13-year marriage to his second wife, Yoko Wanibe, photographing her each morning as she left for work, and making her a central figure within his practice. Elsewhere, Richard Billingham's (b.1970, Birmingham, UK) series *Ray's a Laugh* (1995–6) documents the lives of his parents, Ray and Liz, in a council flat in England's Black Country. Offering a raw and intimate portrayal of family life shaped by poverty and addiction, the images have become some of the most significant in contemporary British photography.

Curator of Cultural Empowerment, Tafadzwa Makwabarara, said: "Every photograph in this exhibition tells a love story, but not always the one we expect. Love appears here as friendship, family, commitment, longing, and self-acceptance, reminding us that there is no single way to love or be loved."

Director of the Sainsbury Museum and Art Centre, Jago Cooper, said: "If anyone wants to know what love really is, they need to see this show. The secret of human connection is captured by these extraordinary photographs and if you look at them through an open heart, the mystery of love can be seen and felt within."

Love Stories is curated by Tafadzwa Makwabarara, Curator of Cultural Empowerment at the Sainsbury Museum and Art Centre.

Exploring the everyday reality of close relationships, the exhibition is part of the Sainsbury Museum and Art Centre's latest series of innovative exhibitions exploring fundamental and timeless questions. This season, which asks *How Do We Find Love?*, also includes the exhibitions *The Last Human Kiss* and *Ecstasy and the Aftermath,* both launching 13 November.

The season explores the profound complexities of human relationships, desire and intimacy, from classical depictions of romantic gestures to contemporary, photographic projects looking at close relationships – whether they be romantic,

familial, or platonic. Timeless and universal in its scope, the exhibition series proposes that art is the sharpest tool we have for thinking about intimacy and asks audiences to sit with its complexities and contradictions.

NOTES TO EDITORS

For more information, interviews and images:
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Exhibition details
Love Stories
18 December 2026 – 30 May 2027
Sainsbury Museum and Art Centre, University of East Anglia,
Norfolk Road,
Norwich NR4 7TJ

The Sainsbury Museum and Art Centre continues its innovative series of investigative exhibitions in 2026 with a new programme that examines love and intimacy.

Concurrent exhibitions and interventions ask *How Do We Find Love*?, featuring:

- *The Last Human Kiss*, 13 November 2026 – 11 April 2027
- *Ecstasy and the Aftermath,* 13 November – 11 April 2027
- *Love Stories,* 18 December 2026 – 30 May 2027

ALL HIGH-RESOLUTION IMAGES CAN BE FOUND HERE

Opening times
Tuesday – Friday 9am–6pm (exhibitions open 9.30am)
Saturday – Sunday 10am–5pm
Closed Mondays, including bank holidays

Entry
A Universal Ticket grants access to the permanent collection, Lower and Mezzanine Galleries, and Sculpture Park. Entry tickets can be free, or you can choose to support the Sainsbury Museum and Art Centre through your contribution.

The **Sainsbury Museum and Art Centre** has a unique perspective on how art can foster cultural dialogue and exchange. Following a radical relaunch in 2023 the museum formally recognises the lifeforce of artworks, opening the door for people to build relationships across a dynamic art landscape.

The living art of the Sainsbury Museum and Art Centre can help reframe and answer the most important questions people have in their lives. More than a museum to learn more about artists, cultures and movements such as Francis Bacon, the Tang Dynasty or modernism, it is a place of experience, where collections are animate and visitors are invited to build emotional connections with artworks.

The Sainsbury Museum and Art Centre was one of the first museums in the world to display art from all around the globe and from all time periods equally and collectively. In 1973, Sir Robert and Lady Lisa Sainsbury donated their non-conformist collection, which transcended traditional barriers between art, architecture, archaeology and anthropology, to the University of East Anglia, and created an entirely new type of museum.

Housed in Sir Norman Foster's revolutionary debut public building, the space aimed for an interactive relationship between visitor, object and landscape, placing artworks from the collection within an open yet intimate 'Living Area'.

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